

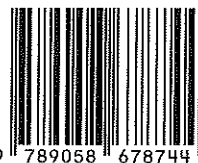
Curating the European University: Exposition and Public Debate

The university is an institution invented during the Middle Ages. As *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* the university was a specific community or association of scholars and students gathered around books and preoccupied with study and the search for truth. But what is the role of the university today?

The meaning of teaching, study and research has changed with books being replaced by screens, with online learning environments replacing lecture halls and students becoming learners. In the light of a growing emphasis on innovation and development, competitiveness between institutions and the privatisation of knowledge, the role of communities of scholars and students is clearly changing. Some argue that the university enters a new phase, while others claim that we actually face the end of the age of the university.

In order to address these issues, a conference was organized around an exposition of projects that present new ways of publishing, an alternative organization of a department, initiatives related to open access and open source, university architecture and accessibility... Taking as a point of departure their exhibited project, each of the contributors to *Curating the European University* reflects on the current challenges the university is facing today with a specific focus on its public role. The book, being at the same time a catalogue, includes textual and graphic descriptions of different projects, and offers a unique contribution to the public debate on the role of the university.

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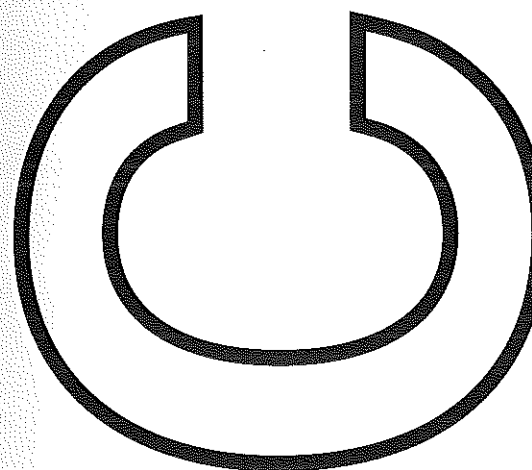
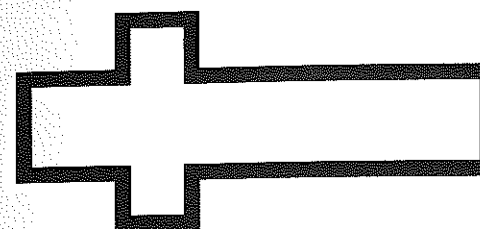
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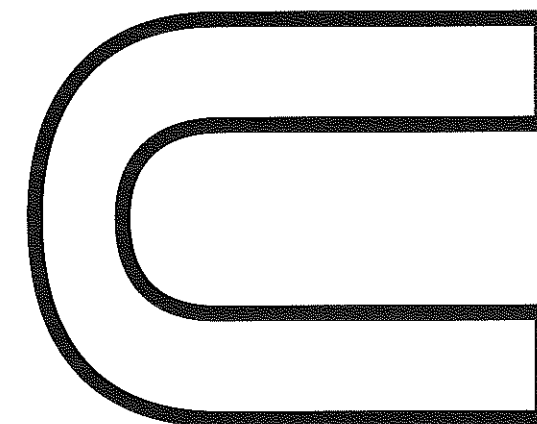
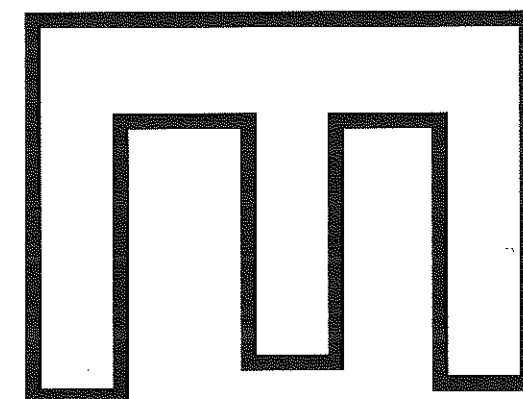
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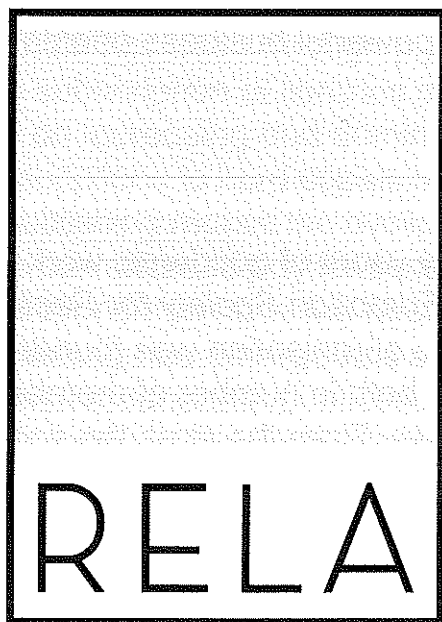
Exposition and Public Debate

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**European Journal for Research on the Education
and Learning of Adults – A Contribution to
Diversity in the European Academic Landscape
by Andreas Fejes (Linköping University,
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It is obvious that the university landscape has been changing drastically on a world-wide scale in recent years. Both research and teaching are increasingly positioned and position themselves in the competition regime that today pervades almost all sectors of society. This is definitely also the case in Europe. The Bologna *reform* in the *European Space of Higher Education* is intensely standardizing higher education, in line with the Anglo-Saxon bachelor master system. The trend to measure the research output in terms publications in internationally refereed journals, mostly in the English language, is becoming a generalized practice in many European countries. A clear consequence of these developments is that cultural diversity in the European landscape of higher education is rapidly vanishing. In our

contribution, we present a new initiative that tries to respond to this standardization machinery. The *European Society for the Research on the Education of Adults* has launched in September 2010 a new academic journal that aims at creating opportunities for a more diversified publication policy and practice. In response to the dominant standardizing tendencies, the *European Journal for the Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (RELA) explores alternative scenarios. As an open access academic journal it creates space for contributions coming from non-English speaking territories in Europe. In doing so, it attempts to preserve the diversity in the European landscape of higher education. At the same time, through its open access policy, it tries to be an alternative to the powerful business orientation of academic publishing nowadays.

The path to launching a new journal

First of all, RELA is the outcome of many years of academic work and networking within the framework of the *European Society for Research on the Education of Adults* (ESREA). The organisation was founded in 1991, and has since expanded in size, both in number of members and in number of active research networks. From the start, the society had two main objectives. Firstly, it aimed at encouraging research in the area of adult education and learning and at facilitating research oriented international communication through network conferences and seminars, and by inviting young researchers and PhD students to participate in such activities. Secondly, in order to establish a research community, an important aim of ESREA has been to encourage international publication of research in all the areas of education and learning of adults. This has mainly been conducted in two ways. On the one hand, through the publication of conference proceedings and books based on conferences, published by university publishers or local publishers; and on the other hand, since 2005, through the publication of a dedicated series with Peter Lang Publishers. Such publications have been important for building a sense of connection and identity around certain research topics and around the ESREA research networks. It has also made research results available to people outside these networks, through distribution to university libraries, and the possibility to buy the books through bookshops and publishers.

For several years there has also been an ongoing discussion about a more stable and continuous channel of publishing research results in this area, as edited collections have a limited distribution. The traditional way of publishing scholarly work is by making use of academic peer-reviewed journals, establishing the scope, the status and the quality criteria of a particular field. RELA is ESREA's bid to take up this academic tradition, interwoven with further work on developing ESREA as a research society.

However it was also felt necessary to reconsider the format and business model of academic journals. The traditional way of publishing journals has been through publishers who charge subscription fees. The subscription of libraries and institutions to online journals constitute an increasing and dominant part of the journals' income, while subscriptions to hard copies have become rather expensive. This way of publishing makes the availability of research results limited to those who can afford to pay for such subscriptions, or who are affiliated with institutions that have the necessary financial means. Open access publishing has emerged as an alternative business model. Open access means that publications are made available on the internet for free, while the production costs are covered by public grants or by user fees paid by those who want to publish their research, or by their institutions. Through open access, research is made available to a broader audience, not only those who can afford. There seems to be a recognition that new technologies and a new global scientific arena call for innovative business models in view of scholarly communication. Therefore, we believe that publishing an open access journal will contribute to broadening the academic debate and to making research more available. Moreover we believe that it provides a space for enhancing the quality of our research. It should be emphasized that open access does not in itself change the editorial tasks, the quality assessment, or the need for technical presentation. Basically the establishment of an online open access journal is just a more contemporary way of meeting the requirements for scholarly publications, and can create an important momentum in the development of ESREA as a research society.

Why a new journal?

The need for a new journal in the area of the education and learning of adults somehow relates to those journals already available in the same field. They include the *Adult Education Quarterly*, the *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *Studies in Continuing Education* and *Studies in the Education of Adults*. What is RELA's contribution as compared to these journals and why launch a new European journal? There are three issues that we would like to raise in response to such questions. 1. The political landscape of the education and learning of adults has changed dramatically in Europe in the last decade. 2. So has the field of research in the education and learning of adults. 3. And the available journals do not in a sufficient way address issues at stake in the education and learning of adults in Europe.

The first issue relates to the changing landscape of adult learning and education. Major changes have taken place in this field in Europe during recent decades, thereby attracting much more public and political attention. Until the 1960s and 1970s, adult education was a relatively limited and marginal sector in most countries in Europe. It was mainly provided by civil society organisations, in some countries with substantial legal and financial support by the state. Its main content was, besides adult literacy education, liberal/popular cultural and political education. In the 1970s and 1980s, new trends emerged in several parts of Europe. Substantial growth in activity occurred, together with new priorities on creating second chance access to higher education, and on vocational training (Salling Olesen, 1989). And since the 1990s this vocationalism has become a more universal trend (Field, 2006), united by the agenda of Lifelong Learning, although still very uneven across countries. In countries with a high level of state involvement in adult education, for example in Sweden, there has been a financial shift in government funding from money spent on non-vocational adult education to vocational adult education (Fejes et al., 2009), thus limiting the opportunities for adults to get a second chance to enter higher education. The national policies have been inspired by initiatives within the European Union such as the European memorandum on lifelong learning (European Commission, 2001). Since the memorandum on lifelong learning was published, the European Commission

(2007) and the council of the European Union (2008) have developed a greater interest in the education and learning of adults, yet in a specific way. For example, through developing a glossary on adult learning, by developing quality criteria for adult learning providers, by developing the competence profiles for adult educators and so forth.

The second reason why a European journal is needed is the changing landscape of research and teaching on the education and learning of adults. The ESREA network, emerging in the beginning of the nineties reflects these (policy) changes. The initiative was in a way triggered by the European policy initiatives since 1990, and the many major policy initiatives taking place in Europe makes the relevance of a European research organisation even greater, both as a support and a questioning of such developments and trends. It is our ambition that RELA will be a forum where such debates will take place.

It is, however, paradoxical that at the time when adult education is growing in volume and policy significance, a number of institutional shifts can be observed at academic departments in some European countries, which reduce rather than strengthen the field of research. In the UK, for example, adult education programs at several universities are being shut down, and even whole departments of adult and/or continuing education have been closed. In such cases, staff has been moved to other departments that focus on, for example, human resource management or general education/teacher training (Crowther, 2004; Usher & Edwards, 2007). Regardless of whether one would argue that these are positive or negative changes, we believe that there is an even increasing need for critical academic forums that can gather researchers who are interested in research on the education and learning of adults in a broad sense, no matter which discipline or department they belong to.

The third and most important reason for launching RELA however, is related to the geographical and cultural bias of the already available international journals. They are all based in the Anglophone world. That is where their articles mainly come from and where they have their main readership. This is no surprise. English has become the *lingua franca* of academic discussions and debates today, and this

means that the publishing industry in the UK, the Commonwealth and North America has expanded from local to global, or has taken the challenge to provide publishing channels for the emerging global community. Something reinforced by governments and university boards across many countries, where performance appraisals are based on the number of publications, and to some extent citations, in “international” academic peer-reviewed journals. We can observe a situation where the Anglophone communities dominate, while all the other local and national academic communities and the practical and cultural experience they refer to, are becoming more and more marginal. Staffan Larsson (2010) has explored the distribution of publications and citations in adult education with regard to the four major journals in this field of research which are, by the way, all Anglo-Saxon. He refers to the networks of publications and citations as “invisible colleges”, “in the sense that they include and exclude, i.e. create demarcations between which texts will be recognised and which do not deserve to be mentioned” (Larsson, 2010, p. 98).

Invisible Colleges (Larsson, 2010)

In 2003 92 journals were indexed within the category education and educational research. 63 were located in the US, 25 in the UK, and 4 in the rest of Europe and the world. (In 2007 there were 3 journals in German and 1 in Spanish).

In 2006 within the category ‘education and educational research’ the geographical distribution of articles published was: USA 51, UK 14,4, Canada 4,1, Australia and New Zealand 5,6. The total is: 75,1 (these regions represent 6 % of the world’s population in 2007).

89,1 % of the citations from 2003, measured in 2008, come from publications in the Anglophone world.

86 % of the references in *Studies in the Education of Adults* Autumn 2008 / Spring 2009 relate to Anglophone authors.

In the light of this, we felt there was a need for a truly international, European journal, which actively embraces non-Anglophone (as well

as Anglophone) contributions, and which thereby broadens the academic discussion in the field. Thus, RELA aims to be a forum that is linguistically ‘open access’, which is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. Practically, we will do this by getting more submissions of papers from colleagues all over Europe who do not ordinarily appear in the “international” journals. Further, the journal encourages contributions from colleagues in other parts of the world who can contribute to the ongoing discussions in Europe. This is not an easy task, as there are different traditions of publishing in different countries, and as it is a challenge for many to write in a language other than their native tongue. Only time can tell if we will be successful in realising these quite high ambitions.

In spite of these reservations against the Anglophone dominance in research debates and publications, we have chosen to publish the journal in English. There are several reasons for this. First of all, we believe that the debate will be improved by enabling more people to take part in it. And, as English is a dominant language of communication, this is the language that might do the work we want. This will have the effect, hopefully, that research results from other countries than those dominating the journals today, will be made available to a wider audience. In this way new insights and research results may emerge. As we do acknowledge the challenge of writing in a language other than one’s native one, we have chosen for a supportive language policy. This is done in three ways. 1. Papers submitted that are not written in perfect English (although we recommend that papers are proof-read before submission if possible) but that are good enough to review for academic quality and rigor, will be sent out for review, if assessed as being within the scope of the journal, and have the basic academic quality as assessed by the editors. If the paper is eventually accepted for publication, the author will be asked to have the paper proof-read by a professional language editor, and then re-submit a version in high-quality English. 2. Papers can be submitted in a language other than English if there is competence within the edi-

torial group for such language. Consequently, potential authors should contact the editorial group before submitting, so as to check whether the language fits the competences of the editorial group. When the green light is given, the paper will be reviewed in the language submitted. If accepted for publication, the author will be asked to submit a high-quality English version of the paper that is identical with the accepted paper in terms of content. 3. Papers previously published in another language elsewhere can be submitted to RELA for review on condition that this is clearly mentioned when the paper is submitted. If accepted, the author will be asked to provide a high-quality translation of the paper. With these measures, we hope to be able to achieve a good geographical distribution of papers in RELA, and to create a real international, multicultural arena, instead of the invisibly biased structures that are operating today.

RELA is now in its first year of operation. The first issue has been published in the autumn of 2010. New issues will be accessible in spring and autumn of 2011. At this stage, an evaluation of the successes and failures of the initiative is not yet possible. However, there are some signs that there is a significant interest in the journal. Contributions come from a wide variety of European (and international) places and are written by authors whose native language is not English. There is good hope that, in this way, the journal will in the future modestly contribute to sustaining diversity in the academic landscape of higher education in Europe, while achieving a high level of academic reflection and discussion on the theory and practice of adult education and learning in present day society.

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